

I Saw a Ship aSailing

by eirenical

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Summary: Berger walked around the dock area, stared at the ships sitting idly in the harbor, waiting for someone to come and give them purpose. He'd felt like that often - like he was sitting idle, just waiting for someone to come along and give him a purpose.

I Saw a Ship aSailing

****Title:**** I Saw a Ship a-Sailing

>Fandom: Hair, the musical: 2009 Revival/Tour

>Pairing: Claude/Berger, Berger/Dionne, Berger/Sheila

>Rating: PG-13

>Word Count: 3,174

>Warnings: slash

****Disclaimer:**** Neither the musical nor the boys belong to me, if they did they'd be groping each other on sta-. *pause* *blinkblink* Huh. Look at that... they do. *eg* :D _((Hair was written by James Rado and Gerome Ragni with music by Galt MacDermot.))_ The title is from a poem, "I Saw a Ship a-Sailing" by Mother Goose, a poem I have loved (and had memorized) since I was a little girl.

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November 11, 2011:**** I'm not really sure where this fits in, universe-wise. It's pretty general and applicable to many. *shrugs* Eh. Whatever. As Castiel would say, "I thought you'd gotten over trying to label me." ^_~ Just a brief bit of introspection on Berger, the day that Claude passes his physical. I started it in my fic notebook the day after Hair's Summer of Love ended on Broadway. I suppose it was a way to deal with my anticipated emotional fall-out.

It's a little dark, a little image-ridden and full of Berger-thoughts that are a little off-skew with the rest of the sane Universe. As short as it is, I kind of love it. Anyway, I finally got it typed up and realized that I didn't need to do much else to it to get it post-ready, so... yeah. I'm taking a cue from a friend and trying to finish a few WIPs before year's end. My way to give a nod to NaNo without actually doing it this year.

...though I am gearing up to pound out the next story in the Algea fic-verse. It's about... oh... 2/3 done? That ought to be do-able by December 31st, don't you think? ^_~

Enjoy and please remember... comments and reviews are love!

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><p>I Saw a Ship a-Sailing
>by Renee-chan

Berger stood at the back of the ferry watching as the New York City skyline receded into the distance. He felt hollowed out. Numb. There had been an invisible time bomb ticking away in their midst for months. They'd all known it. They'd all felt it. Even so, Berger had never truly believed that it was counting down to something real, its goal just as invisible and ethereal as the clock itself.

It wasn't invisible anymore. The clock had run down, the bomb exploded and Berger's life was now just so much shrapnel. Claude's draft notice had arrived in the mail three weeks ago and it had been a haunting specter over the Tribe ever since. It joined their picnics in the park. It followed when they broke into the movie theatre to see that crime drama Claude had been so excited for - *Bonnie and Clint* or somesuch. It snuck between them when they made love. Claude couldn't be rid of it and so neither could Berger.

It was a smug bastard, too, Claude's draft notice. It wrapped Claude up in its embrace, sneered at Berger over Claude's shoulder, taunted him with the idea that it could take Claude away from him for good. And Claude... Claude seemed to welcome its arrogant courting, seemed to agree that he belonged with it instead of with Berger. Berger could convince Claude otherwise, he knew he could. He could convince the other boy to run away with him, away from the war, away from the draft, away from the family who'd never loved him as they should. He could do it.

But he couldn't fight Claude's ghost at the same time. He wasn't strong enough. Maybe Sheila could have helped, could have taken on the other opponent while Berger handled Claude, but she wouldn't. When Berger brought it up, Sheila just rolled her eyes, told him that she didn't believe in ghosts, that Claude's draft card was just a piece of paper which could be burned like any other and that Berger should talk to her later, when he wasn't high. Berger knew better. Ghosts were real and this one was powerful. Burning its physical body would just make it stronger, free it to possess Claude completely. Berger couldn't let that happen. He needed help. He was running out of time.

Berger had woken in the small hours of the morning today and disentangled himself from Dionne and Elizabeth. He'd stepped over Woof where he was curled up alone on the floor and padded naked over

to the open window, took in a deep breath of the pre-dawn air. Berger didn't have it in him to just accept this. Claude was *his*. And no one took what was his, especially not some noncorporeal wisp of an idea. Alone or not, he was going to fight this thing and he was going to win. And that was that.

Quiet steps behind him preceded the gentle hand that touched Berger's shoulder by just enough that he wasn't startled. He turned, softly kissed those dark fingers. Dionne spoke, voice still laced with sleep, "Berger, honey... what are you doing up? It's barely even morning. Come back to bed." Her voice turned sultry, "Come keep me warm, baby."

Berger laughed, low and dark, liked the sound of it, did it again. Dionne smiled, turned her hand to cup Berger's cheek, "That's the way, baby. Come back to bed."

Berger did. He followed the smoky promise in Dionne's eyes, took comfort in the warmth and softness of her body. But his mind... his mind was elsewhere. His mind was with Claude, worrying over the problem of his friend's phantom like a dog would a bone. There had to be a way. There had to...

* * *

><p>Berger had woken later that morning, now curled around Woof on the floor, uncertain how he'd gotten there. Woof had been sleeping like the dead off his high of earlier in the night and hadn't even been aware he'd acquired company, so he was next to no help answering Berger's questions. Finally Elizabeth had draped herself across Dionne's hips, leaned over to shush them. She rolled her eyes and said, "Banana-Berger, there's only so much room up here, you know. You were taking more than your fair share with all your tossing and turning."<p>

Berger had grunted in response to that. He hadn't remembered being kicked off the bed, hadn't remembered tossing and turning, hadn't remembered what dreams had driven him to it, either. Full of restless energy, he'd left Woof with the girls, dressed and gone out. He couldn't be still, couldn't sit inside for another moment.

Berger had finally come to rest on a bench overlooking the Hudson. The sun was up over the horizon by then. Claude would be waking up in Queens, rolling over to turn off his alarm clock, blearily rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Berger liked him like that, sleep-mussed and compliant, liked how the other boy would wilt back down onto the bed and bury his head in Berger's side as he tried to shut out the new day, liked how he would twist his fingers into the curls on Berger's chest as though in the fringe the Tribe's Leader favored on most of his clothes. Most of all, though, Berger liked that moment when Claude would register who was beside him in bed and smile with such quiet peace and joy that it would make Berger's heart swell with stupid pride that he'd been the one to put that smile there. Sometimes Berger would set an early alarm for them just so he could have that moment with Claude.

...sometimes Berger was an ass.

But not today. Today, Berger was here and Claude was in Queens... alone. As Berger sat staring off across the Hudson, Claude would be

waking, rubbing the sleep from his eyes as he tried to deny the day. But there would be no Berger to help hide him. There would be no dark curls for him to twist his nimble fingers into. There would only be the harsh light of day and the grim specter over his shoulder ready and waiting to drag him down to 39 Whitehall Street for his physical.

Berger had jerked up off the bench then, unable to sit still with that thought piercing him. He took his brain offline then, gave his feet the reins. Twenty minutes later, had found him here on the ferry, watching the skyline recede. He didn't even recall paying for his ticket.

When they reached the dock in Jersey, Berger got off the ferry along with all of ten other passengers and turned to watch until it sailed off again across the Hudson. No one really rode the ferries anymore. They were a dying breed, a relic of the past, unable to keep up with the times. Young as he was, sometimes Berger felt that way, too - like he was unable to keep up, like everyone else was moving forward, moving away, moving on... and leaving him behind. He wondered, sometimes, if he'd lose the Elmira before or after he lost Claude. It would be like losing an old friend. He'd told that run down old boat so many of his secrets over the years, whispered them over the railings to be swallowed up by the roar of her engines. She kept his secrets well, the Elmira. Berger would miss her when she was gone.

He would miss Claude more.

Snorting at his own folly, Berger tucked his hands into his pockets and started walking. He walked around the dock area, stared at all the ships sitting idly in the harbor, waiting for someone to come along and give them purpose. He'd felt like that often - like he was sitting idle, just waiting for someone to come along and give him a purpose. He'd once thought it would be Sheila. She was so passionate, so driven - he'd thought for sure that some of that drive would rub off on him, would prompt him to finally take action about *something*... but it hadn't. Sheila had purpose, all right, and she was almost desperate to imbue him with the same, but it was the wrong purpose. Berger didn't care about the greater good, about the rights of the people in Viet Nam, about ending the war. He only cared about how those things impacted the people he *did* care about. That wasn't the same thing. So, he couldn't get impassioned about it, couldn't force himself to feel that fire that drove Sheila on so relentlessly. Not to say that Sheila hadn't tried to make him. She had. She'd failed. Berger snickered softly to himself as he thought, "You can't turn a sailboat into a submarine no matter how often you capsize it, Sheila, my dear."

Sheila didn't see that, though. Sheila *couldn't* see that. White bread suburbia had its talons in her more firmly than it did Berger. She talked of protest, of brothers and sisters, of equality, but her equality was different from Berger's. She wanted everyone to be equals so they would all be the same - equally passionate, equally united, equally minded. Berger's equality left room for difference, for harmony... for mess and chaos. Sheila's equality could never be Berger's equality and so her purpose could never be Berger's purpose... but *she* would never see that. And so they fought. Constantly. Berger hurt her and he pretended that she didn't hurt him, let her take comfort in her friends, the Tribe... in

Claude.

Now, Claude... Claude was just like Berger, another idle ship sitting in the harbor, waiting for a purpose. Berger could see it, understood it. But Claude had been raised in the same white bread suburbia as Sheila had and, just like her, he thought that all purposes were the same. He thought that they all led to the same place in the end... into his father's life, responsibility to G-d and country, to a wife, two kids and another house in suburbia indistinguishable from the one in which he'd been raised. He didn't see Berger's equality, his hope for a purpose that was *his*, that would match up with how he'd been made... not just how he'd been raised.

That was really the crux of the issue. Claude was going to go along, let himself get drafted, let himself get *killed*, just because he'd been filled with the wrong purpose, because he didn't see that there were other options... because Berger hadn't had another option to give him.

Berger stopped walking, then, frozen in place by a moment of epiphany. All this time he'd been sitting idle, waiting for someone to give him a purpose and he'd never realized that he already *had* one. This... *this* was his purpose. Berger's purpose was Claude - to show Claude that there were other choices in life, that not everything had to end in suburbia... that you could make your *own* purpose.

Berger threw back his head and laughed, laughed even harder when people stopped to stare, waved jauntily when a woman crossed the street to get away from him. He felt free, uncontained, a little wild. He knew what he had to do now, knew how he could give his life meaning. He didn't need Sheila for that anymore. He did need one thing though, and there was only one place he could get it.

Berger headed back towards the docks and charmed his way onto a bus heading north. For once, George Berger actually wanted to go to school.

* * *

><p>Later on, Berger would wonder if he'd overdone it a little. He probably shouldn't have screamed in the principal's face. Mooning the hall monitor might have been a little over the top, too. Slipping the chem teacher that LSD had most certainly been out of line. Really, at this point, any single one of those acts would have been enough alone to accomplish his end... he supposed it was fair to say he was feeling self-indulgent. And really, no one had gotten hurt, so where was the harm? At the end of the day, he got what he wanted... his expulsion slip.<p>

Berger supposed he could have just dropped out, but he really didn't want Sheila to be able to talk him into going back. And she'd have tried, too. She'd have ridden back from D.C. on some fucking white cavalry steed and "saved" him from his own bad decision. This way there was no going back. Not for any of them. And that expulsion paper was a promise. Because on *it's* heels would come a draft notice of Berger's very own. And *it* could tangle with the ghost of Claude's while *he* dealt with Claude, himself. Let the two of them have each other and good riddance to them both.

The Tribe was torn about it, of course. They were concerned. They knew what his expulsion meant as well as he did. They dreaded what it would bring - both in his draft notice and in Sheila's reaction. Berger couldn't have cared less either way. The only thing that mattered here was that Berger had finally found his purpose and he was going to accomplish it in any way he could.

By the time Claude joined them all later that day... Jesus. He was so shaken up about passing his physical that he didn't even notice that anything was off. And listening to him rattle off his fears, his desperate, impassioned pleas for Berger to save him... suddenly Berger was angry. Claude talked of getting out of going, of running away so he couldn't be found, but the whole while there was this almost manic glee in his eyes, as though he was glad that the feeling of persecution he'd had all his life had been justified. Claude wasn't running away. He wasn't getting arrested. He wasn't burning his draft card. In the end, he was going to go along, Daddy's good little boy, Mommy's brave little soldier. He was going to go. He was going to die. And nothing any of them said was going to convince him otherwise. And that had been the problem all along. Berger couldn't convince him on his own. The call of duty, of white bread suburbia, of that same-same-same equality was too damned strong.

With a manic grin of his own, Berger grabbed Claude by the jacket, yanked him away from the others of the Tribe and screamed in *his* face, tried to imbue Claude with *Berger's* passion in much the same way that Sheila had always tried to do for him. He failed just as miserably. Once they were both crumpled on the ground, Claude shooting him hurt and betrayed looks, Berger finally pulled his trump card. He edged closer, knee-to-knee, and wrapped a hand around the back of Claude's neck. He said, simply, "Claudio... I got kicked out of school, man."

And Claude... oh, bless his poor, dumb, self-sacrificing martyr of a heart - Claude's egocentric tirade ended right there. Berger could see it in Claude's eyes that this stupidity was finally ending, that he'd finally, *finally* gotten something right. He even caught it out of the corner of his eye as the specter of Claude's draft notice tried to edge back in, to get between them again, and for the first time... was blocked. Yessssssss. He'd been *right*. Claude mutely shook his head. Berger just smiled and shrugged, "Now *I'm* Viet Nam bait, too."

And for the first time since Berger had met him, he finally saw Claude's eyes fill with a new purpose, one that was his very own. And when he identified what it was, Berger almost started laughing with joy. What purpose had Claude found? He'd found *Berger*. Out from under the influence of that evil, little spirit, Claude was finally thinking, not just reacting. And Claude was smart, smarter than he'd been acting lately. He'd figure it out. Berger knew he would. He could see the wheels turning in Claude's shifty, little brain already - he wouldn't run to save himself, no, never for that... but to save *Berger*? Oh, yes. Yes, he would. It was better than Berger could have ever hoped.

Claude shook his head again, whispered harshly, "No. No, you... not you. Berger... not *you*."

Berger smirked, leaned in closer, pressed a butterfly kiss into the corner of Claude's lips as he tried not to crow his delight, instead

he rubbed Claude's face in it a little harder, said, "Yep. Me. Prime, Grade A, Special Cut... bucket of fried worms. Viet. Nam. Bait." He then made an exaggerated slurping noise.

Claude made a face at that, nose wrinkling in disgust, then clutched at Berger's jacket, "You... Go back. Go back and talk to them. Take it back. Whatever you did, Berger... take it back. It's not too late for you!"

But it was. It was far too late. That was what Claude didn't understand. It had been too late for Berger the very second that it had been too late for Claude. He shook his head, tugged at Claude's arms until he had the other boy securely in his lap. He slid his hands into Claude's hair, wrapped one hand around the back of the other boy's neck, "Claudio... it is too late. They've probably already got my draft card in the mail. They've been waitin' for me to slip up... just waiting. And I didn't just slip up, man. I full on crashed and burned. There's no going back, Claudio. I'm getting drafted, same as you."

Claude's eyes shut tight and his breathing quickened. After a few moments, his hands raised to tangle in the fringe of Berger's jacket, tightened convulsively on the leather. His eyes flew open, that fierce purpose written in every line of those gorgeous brown orbs. He said simply, "No. You are not." Before Berger could answer that statement, Claude shook him, "No. We'll run away to Canada first. They're not going to get you. They *won't*."

Berger smiled, tilted his face to lean in and kiss Claude. When he pulled back, his smile was all smirk, "So... I guess you really *can't* sleep without me."

Claude's eyes softened, then, his hands loosing their hold and turning to smooth the wrinkles he'd put in Berger's jacket as he corrected the other man's words, "No... I *won't* sleep without you."

And really... wasn't that just better than all the damned tea in China? Berger slid his hands under Claude's jacket, pressed them against the warmth of Claude's sides. He leaned in, caught Claude's lips in another kiss. Sheila could jump and rail against it all she liked. The draft board could scream its impotent fury from across the border until Doomsday. Claude and Berger's ghosts could claw at them with frozen, wraithlike fingers. It didn't matter. None of it mattered. He smirked, "You and me, Claudio. You and me. We don't need any other purpose but that."

* * *

><p>AN:**

Berger: Ah... *holds up a finger, pauses* Hm.

R-chan: *crosses arms over chest* *waits patiently*

Berger: *frowns*

R-chan: *frowns back*

Claude: *twitch* Oh for goodness sake, what on Earth could you have

to complain about here? When all is said and done, this was a story about us deciding to run away to Canada together to escape the draft. And it's pretty damned mild in comparison to, oh... _just about everything else she's written for us._

Berger: Yeah, but... *shivers* I don't know. It was kinda spooky, I'm not gonna lie.

Claude: *shrugs* She's been OD'ing on _Supernatural_ lately. I think it rubbed off.

Berger: What's Supernatural?

Claude: *shrugs again* Do we really care?

Berger: *sigh* No, I guess we don't.

Crutchie: Hey, wait a second... where the hell am I? And what is this doing in the middle of my fic?

Nuriko: *snerts* Now, now. Be a polite visitor.

Claude: *rolls his eyes* You? A polite visitor? That's gotta be a first.

Nuriko: *narrows eyes* Mind your tongue, kid. I've been here a hell of a lot longer than you.

Spot: *rolls his eyes* Yeah, yeah. And I been here a lot longer than _both_ o' yous. Keep your pants on.

Crutchie: *gleeful* Or don't. Your call.

Spot: *growls, pounces* Why _exactly_ did I let you go, again?

Crutchie: *leers*

Berger: O_O Oh... oh, now... huh. Is that even physically possible?

Claude: *rolls his eyes* They're like... sixteen.

Spot: *pipes up* Seventeen!

Claude: *twitch* Seventeen. Whatever. They're young. More flexible.

Berger: *sweatdrop* I'm only eighteen, you know. And you're nineteen. Not a big world of difference there.

Claude: O_O No. No, we are not... Berger!

Berger: ^_^

Nuriko: *pulls up a chair and begins taking notes*

Questions, comments, elderberries?

End
file.